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Visitor Guide to The Stone House



**Motherwell Homestead
National Historic Site**

AUSSI DISPONIBLE EN FRANÇAIS

WHY IS THIS A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE?

In 1968, this property was transferred to the Canadian Parks Service which exists to protect natural and historic resources and to educate Canadians about their heritage. Motherwell Homestead was deemed to have national historic significance for these reasons:

ONTARIAN SETTLEMENT — *Motherwell and his family are an example of Ontario settlers who came to the prairies in the late 1800's.*

AGRARIAN UNREST — *Motherwell was instrumental in forming the Territorial Grain Growers which fought for many rights for prairie farmers.*

SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURE — *Motherwell was a strong advocate of new farming methods (especially dry-land farming) and a strong believer in education for farmers.*

POLITICS — *As Minister of Agriculture in both the Saskatchewan government (1905 - 1918) and the Canadian government (minister from 1921 - 1929, M.P. until 1939), Motherwell made significant contributions to both Canadian agriculture and politics.*

CONSTRUCTION OF THE STONE HOUSE

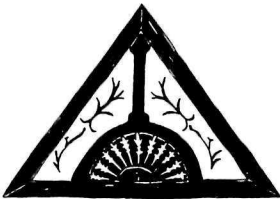
Like most pioneers, Motherwell lived in a modest log cabin for 15 years before drawing up plans for the stone house he built in 1897. The stones were all hand-picked by W.R. Motherwell while breaking his land. After being split and shaped, they were then raised into place with a block and tackle. Built to withstand the harsh prairie climate, the walls of the house are two feet thick.



Motherwell's first home 1882-1897

ARCHITECTURE OF THE HOUSE

The architectural style of the house, called "Italianate" is a close copy of many farmhouses in Motherwell's native Lanark County, Ontario.



detail of gingerbread woodwork, front window

Take a moment to walk around the outside of the house. On the south side, Motherwell's close attention to detail is evident in the careful placement of the stones which match over the windows and in the corners. As you look at the front of the house, decorated with

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gingerbread woodwork, ask yourself what kind of impression Motherwell was hoping to make on visitors. In contrast, the back of the house, considered to be the work area, is very plain.

THE GROUNDS

If the house gives us clues about Motherwell's desire for order, his prosperity and his status in the community, then the grounds are a further reflection of what was important to W. R. Motherwell.



The family's "outdoor livingroom" is enclosed by a carragana hedge to the south of the house. Picture this scene... ladies in white canvas boots and dresses batting a ball on the tennis lawn... guests enjoying a cup of tea under the shelter of the marquee tent... gentlemen in knickers testing their skill at croquet. Not exactly a typical scene at a Saskatchewan farm in the early 1900's? You're right — what you see here is an oasis of refined Ontario life on the prairies.

A lattice fence on the north side of the house was intended to screen the view from the road of men removing blocks of ice from the stone icewell or hired girls hanging the wash out to dry. A stroll down Lover's Lane (the tree-lined path separating the barnyard from the house area) will lead you to the hired men's cottage (not open to the public).

Known as "Lanark Place", the farmstead is a visible reminder of Motherwell's desire to put the stamp of his familiar Ontario landscape on the strange and forbidding prairie. The farmstead is practical, but it also shows that after 15 years of pioneering, Motherwell had not only "made it" but was able to live in as refined a manner as a prosperous farmer in his native Ontario.

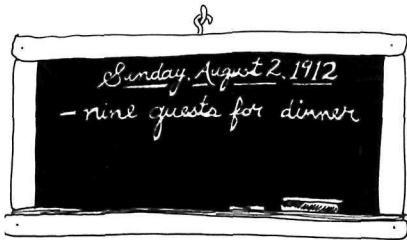
HOW TO TOUR THE HOUSE

As you explore the house, travel back in time to the 1910 - 1914 period. Half the artifacts you will see once belonged to the Motherwell family and can never be replaced. To ensure that the Motherwell home is still here for your grandchildren to enjoy, **PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH THE ARTIFACTS.**

Your tour will begin at the west end of the house where a small screened porch leads you to the summer kitchen.

THE SUMMER KITCHEN

As the heart of the home, the summer kitchen was the room where most of the essential tasks of the household were done.



For a moment, put yourself into the well-worn boots of a hired girl. As the daughter of an immigrant or a teenager from a nearby reserve, you and one or two other girls would rise at 4:30 a.m.

Imagine the heat as you toiled over the woodstove, cooking, preserving food and baking.

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The stove, which was the focal point of this room, also provided warm water for washing stacks of dishes and piles of laundry. Additional tasks of house-cleaning, butter churning and ironing would keep you busy many days until 10 o'clock at night! Long as these days may seem to us, the hired girls enjoyed the “modern conveniences” this kitchen offered, such as the icebox and the “automatic washer” which were not typical features of Saskatchewan farmhouses in 1912.

If you were a hired man, you would check the blackboard daily to see what chores were waiting for you. Once you completed a task, you could mark an “X” beside the instruction.

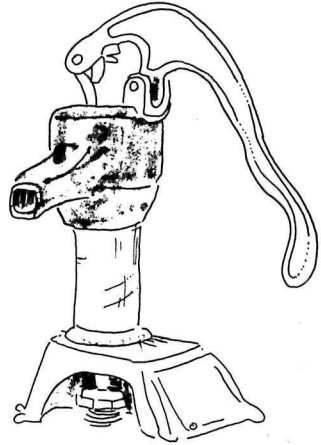
The summer kitchen was used from May to October in order to keep the rest of the house as cool as possible. If the summer kitchen got too warm, the ladder on the ceiling could be lowered, allowing a trap door to be opened to provide ventilation.



THE WINTER KITCHEN

Had you been a hired hand in 1914, you would have joined the family and their guests for a meal around this table. Most families would not have invited the hired men to eat with them, but

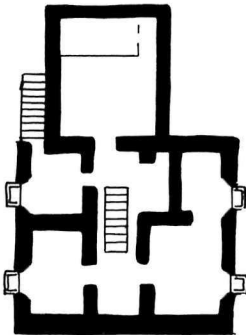
W. R. Motherwell once told a farmhand, "Mac, if you're not good enough to eat with me, you're not good enough to work for me." Evening meals concluded with a short religious service after which everybody present was expected to contribute to the cent-a-meal box. The pennies were collected for missionary work.



cent-a-meal box

During the winter months, this room lost its spacious feeling and became a cramped and busy workplace more typical of a Saskatchewan farmhouse. Just picture the chaos as the stove was moved from the summer kitchen to the west wall of this room! The pungent smells of wet socks and mitts drying above the stove would mingle with the scent of freshly baked bread or newly washed laundry.

THE BASEMENT (not open to the public)



Basement Floor Plan

The basement has two entrances, one from the hall and another under a hatch at the east end of the porch. The hired men used the hatch to carry in loads of wood for the furnace. As solidly built as the rest of the house, the basement has full fieldstone walls and

almost as many rooms as upstairs, including storerooms for potatoes, vegetables, meat and dairy products. Water can be pumped from the basement cistern into the copper sink in the winter kitchen.

THE OFFICE

Can you see W.R. Motherwell hunched over this desk as he struggled to find the right words for his next speech? Here, in his private domain, Motherwell worked on farm business, hired and fired men and did his political writing. The Northern Electric crankbox telephone had a private line to Regina, so that Motherwell could discuss political issues in private.

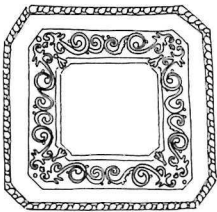


THE BACK PARLOUR

If you were invited into this room at all (and if you were a child, you wouldn't be), this is where you sat up straight and minded your manners. Parlours were reserved for formal Sunday visits or for gatherings after baptisms and weddings. Parlours, while not uncommon to prairie farmhouses, are strong reminders of the Victorian values which prevailed in Ontario.

THE LOBBY

There wasn't much relaxing in the Motherwell home, but if there was a room where family members could be comfortable, then this was it. The Motherwell family and hired help enjoyed many an evening gathered around the Quebec heater which sat in front of the decorative fireplace, playing checkers, pit or reading aloud to each other.



detail - in ceiling in "lobby"

Motherwell's second wife, Catherine, called this room the "lobby" in reference to the political meetings held here. It was here that Motherwell and Peter Dayman, a local farmer, signed notices for the

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founding meeting of the Territorial Grain Growers Association (TGGA) in 1901. The first successful farm lobby organization, the TGGA spawned other provincial associations like the Saskatchewan Grain Growers. The native beadwork on the wall includes gifts given to Catherine Motherwell who was the principal at File Hills Residential School prior to her marriage. Her former pupils often visited her at Lanark Place.

The pair of portraits are W.R. Motherwell's parents. A picture of Adeline, Motherwell's first wife, hangs close to the front door. A photograph of the first Saskatchewan cabinet hangs near the stairs. Motherwell was appointed Commissioner of Agriculture in 1905 because of his strong lobbying skills.



FRONT PARLOUR



Although the front parlour may look as formal as the back parlour, this room was used as a gathering place for the whole household on Sundays. The hired girls enjoyed their day of rest as they joined in on the hymn singing and listened to Mr. Motherwell read from the large family Bible.

UPSTAIRS FRONT HALL

On the wall of the upstairs hall hangs the weathered handle of Motherwell's first walking plough. Amongst the many fine things in this house, this plough handle must have served as a constant reminder of Motherwell's early years of struggle as a pioneer.



What impression do you think the political cartoonist was trying to give of Motherwell when he was the Commissioner of Agriculture in the Saskatchewan government?

The photograph on the wall shows Motherwell in his role as a leading political activist even before he was officially involved in Saskatchewan politics. Pictured here is a group of Abernethy farmers who boarded a train in Indian Head, determined to convince the railway commissioner,

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Sir William Whyte, to extend the rail line to Abernethy. After staying on the train for an hour, Sir William was convinced and the rail line reached Abernethy the next year in 1904. Not only that, but Whyte was so impressed by Motherwell's leadership skills that he recommended him as a member of the Saskatchewan cabinet in 1905.

ATTIC (Not open to the public)

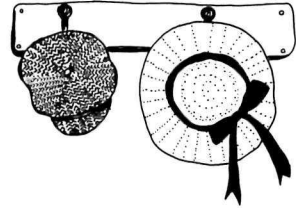
What did you do if you were a child and nobody wanted you around during meetings in the lobby or if it was raining outside? You went to the attic, of course! In the Victorian world, children were to be seen and not heard. The children would have enjoyed this large room with its four eyebrow windows providing a panoramic view of the prairies.

THE BEDROOMS



The two front bedrooms (master and guest bedrooms) are not only the largest bedrooms in the house, but they command the finest view. Guests in particular would have been given the best accommodation possible. At one time a small sitting room (now Aunt Janet's Room) adjoined the guest room.

As you head towards the back of the house, compare the size of the stairwell and the hallways. Talmage Motherwell worked as a hired man for his father which may explain why his room is at the back of the house. You might wish to put yourselves back into the boots of the hired girls as you look at their tiny quarters and

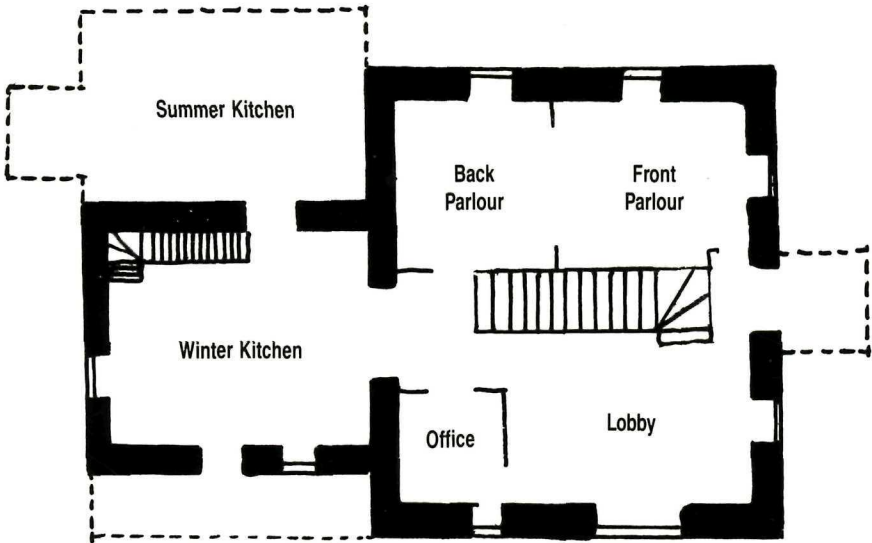


speculate on how different their life might have been from Alma Motherwell's. The social division between the front and the back of the house is very evident as you compare the lives of the family and the hired help.

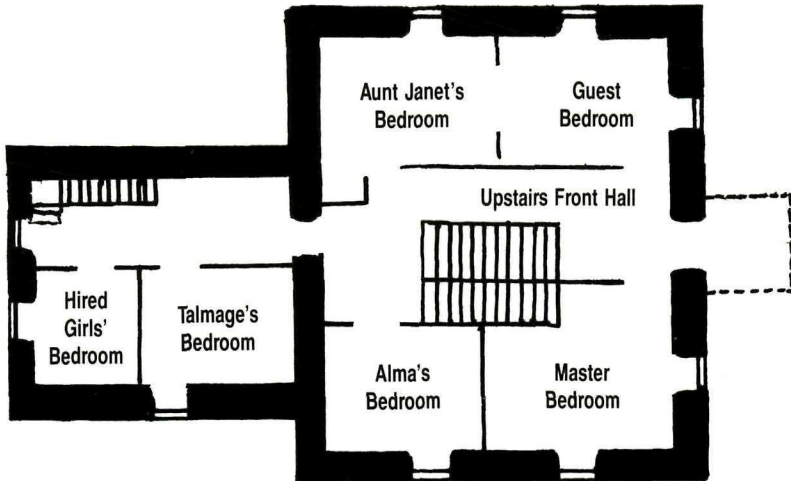
WILLIAM RICHARD MOTHERWELL, 1860 - 1943

- 1860 — *William Richard Motherwell is born in Lanark County, Ontario*
- 1882 — *he comes West after obtaining a degree from the Ontario College of Agriculture*
- 1883 — *breaks first sod on land near Abernethy; lives in a tent before building a log cabin*
- 1884 — *marries Adeline Rogers*
- 1886, 1888 — *two children die in infancy*
- 1890 — *a son, Talmage, is born*
- 1892 — *a daughter, Alma, is born*
- 1897 — *builds stone house*
- 1901 — *Motherwell is a founding member of the newly formed Territorial Grain Growers*
- 1905 — *Adeline dies*
- *Motherwell is elected to the newly formed Saskatchewan government; he becomes Commissioner of Agriculture*
- 1908 — *marries Catherine Gillespie*
- 1918 — *Motherwell resigns from Saskatchewan government*
- 1921 — *wins seat in federal election and is sworn in as Dominion Minister of Agriculture*
- 1930 — *after a short break from politics in 1926 when the government was defeated (later re-elected), Motherwell retires as Minister of Agriculture but stays on as a Member of Parliament.*
- 1939 — *retires from politics as the “Grand Old Man of Canadian Agriculture”*
- 1943 — *dies and is buried in Abernethy cemetery*

1st Floor



2nd Floor



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